

Week Ending Friday, February 5, 1999

**Statement on the Attorney General's
Decision To Conclude the
Investigation of Harold Ickes**
January 29, 1999

I have always had confidence that Harold Ickes acted lawfully and appropriately, and I am pleased by the decision announced by the Attorney General today. Harold's contributions to this administration over the years have helped improve the quality of life in this country, and I will always be thankful for his advice and hard work on behalf of the American people.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address
January 30, 1999

Good morning. Americans have always believed that people who work hard should be able to provide for themselves and their families. That's a fundamental part of America's basic bargain. Today I want to talk to you about what we're doing to make sure that bargain works for all our people, by ensuring that women and men earn equal pay for equal work.

We're living in a time of remarkable promise, with the strongest economy in a generation: nearly 18 million new jobs; the lowest unemployment in 29 years; family incomes rising by \$3,500, the greatest real wage growth in over two decades. We have an opportunity now, and an obligation, to make sure every American fairly benefits from this moment of prosperity.

One of the best ways to meet this challenge is to put an end to wage discrimination. When President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act 35 years ago, women were joining the work force in ever-increasing numbers, but their work was undervalued. At that time, for every dollar a man brought home in his

paycheck, a woman doing the same work earned only 58 cents.

We've made a lot of progress since those days. Last June my Council of Economic Advisors reported that the gender gap has narrowed considerably. In fact, it's been cut nearly in half. Today, women earn about 75 cents for every dollar a man earns. Now, we can be proud of this progress, but 75 cents on the dollar is still only three-quarters of the way there, and Americans can't be satisfied until we're all the way there.

One big reason why the pay gap persists, despite women's gains in education and experience, is the demeaning practice of wage discrimination in our workplaces. Too many employers still undervalue and underpay work done by women. And make no mistake, when a woman is denied equal pay, it doesn't just hurt her; it hurts her family, and that hurts America.

Between 1995 and 1996 alone, the number of families with 2 working parents increased by nearly 2 million. And in over 10 million families, the mother is the only breadwinner.

Now just think what a 25-percent wage gap means in real terms over the course of a working year. How many bags of groceries, or visits to the doctor? How many mortgage or rent or car payments? And over the course of a working life, it can mean hundreds of thousands of dollars: smaller pensions, less to put aside for retirement.

To prepare our Nation for the 21st century, we must do more to ensure equal pay, equal opportunity, and equal dignity for working women. Today I'm pleased to announce a new \$14 million equal pay initiative, included in my balanced budget, to help the Department of Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission expand opportunities in the workplace for women and end wage discrimination once and for all. With more resources to identify wage discrimination, to educate employers and workers about their rights and responsibilities, and to bring more women into better-paying